Frequently Asked Questions: City Watersheds of Sonoma Valley Fryer Creek Project

The City of Sonoma Storm Drain Master Plan and the currently effective FEMA Flood Study found that Fryer Creek has potential to cause flooding during large storms. Other studies have identified areas in Sonoma Valley where groundwater levels are dropping. The goal of the City Watersheds of Sonoma Valley Fryer Creek Project is to reduce flood risks while helping recharge groundwater levels.

To that end, the Sonoma County Water Agency (which manages Flood Zone 3A in Sonoma Valley), the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District, the City of Sonoma, and the Sonoma Ecology Center are working together on a project that will capture rainwater during large storms and use it to enhance an existing wetland area, allowing the water to slow and sink into the ground before going into Fryer Creek in the City of Sonoma. An additional component of the project will reduce downstream flood risks by replacing or modifying a culvert in Fryer Creek at West MacArthur Street.

The partners were recently awarded a $1.9 million grant from Department of Water Resources to help design and construct the $4 million project.

Where will the project be located?
The project has two components:

1. A groundwater recharge area designed to enhance the existing seasonal wetland at the headwaters of Fryer Creek on the Montini Open Space Preserve (near Montini Way and Fifth Street West)

2. Modification or replacement of a culvert on Fryer Creek at the MacArthur Street crossing.

Are you building a reservoir? The enhanced and enlarged wetland area will allow water to slow down during storms, sink into the ground, and then slowly drain into Fryer Creek. Unlike reservoirs, which are designed to store water continuously, the enhanced recharge area will hold water for only few days or less following a storm.

How will the site be used the rest of the year?
The recharge area will continue to serve as open space and be a grazing site for cattle on the Montini Preserve.

Will the recharge area affect public use of the Montini Preserve? No. The public will continue to have access to the preserve and to existing trails. In fact, the project includes an interpretive sign that explains the purpose of the recharge area. The proposed project will be in keeping with the natural values of the conservation easement with consideration of scenic and aesthetic values. Community input will be valued and an important component to project design.

What will the recharge area look like? The project is currently being designed. However, the goal is for the recharge area to look like a natural part of the landscape.

How high will the berms be for the recharge area? The project is currently being designed but the goal is for the berms to be low-profile, gently sloped, and no higher than the existing berm at the south side of the property. Preserving the vista is a project priority.

What is the size of the recharge area? The recharge area may be approximately seven acres.

What is the problem on Fryer Creek? A storm drain study conducted for the City of Sonoma and the currently effective FEMA Flood Study identified Fryer Creek, near the West MacArthur Street crossing and upstream near West Napa Street, Church Street, and near Fano Lane, to be areas at high risk of flooding during large storms. The culvert under the West MacArthur crossing allows water to back up and potentially overflow the creek banks upstream.

What will be done to reduce flood risks? The design process has just begun, but initial ideas include: 1) design of the recharge area in the upper watershed to reduce peak flood flows sent downstream and 2) replacement or modification of the MacArthur Street culvert to eliminate or reduce blockages that prevent water from flowing.

How can I prepare for floods? The FEMA website floodsmart.gov, the official website of the National Flood Insurance Program, contains information about flood risks, preparation and flood insurance.

What will happen on Fryer Creek upstream of the MacArthur crossing? While the design process has just begun, in order to reduce flood risks, it is expected that the creek would become more of a flowing stream rather than still water. The project will remove excess sediment, control invasive weeds, reshape the channel banks, and replant with native plants. Additionally, it could provide enhanced aquatic habitat with the potential elimination of a steelhead passage barrier.

What are the next steps? The project team is awaiting results of the site investigations completed this past fall and winter. The next planned opportunity for public comment will be during the design phase, likely in late fall/early winter 2014.

Who do I contact for more information? Greg Guensch, Sonoma County Water Agency, is the project manager. He can be reached at Gregory. Guensch@scwa.ca.gov or (707) 547-1972. Information is available online at sonomacountywater.org/svflood

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SONOMA COUNTY WATER AGENCY

SONOMA ECOLOGY CENTER

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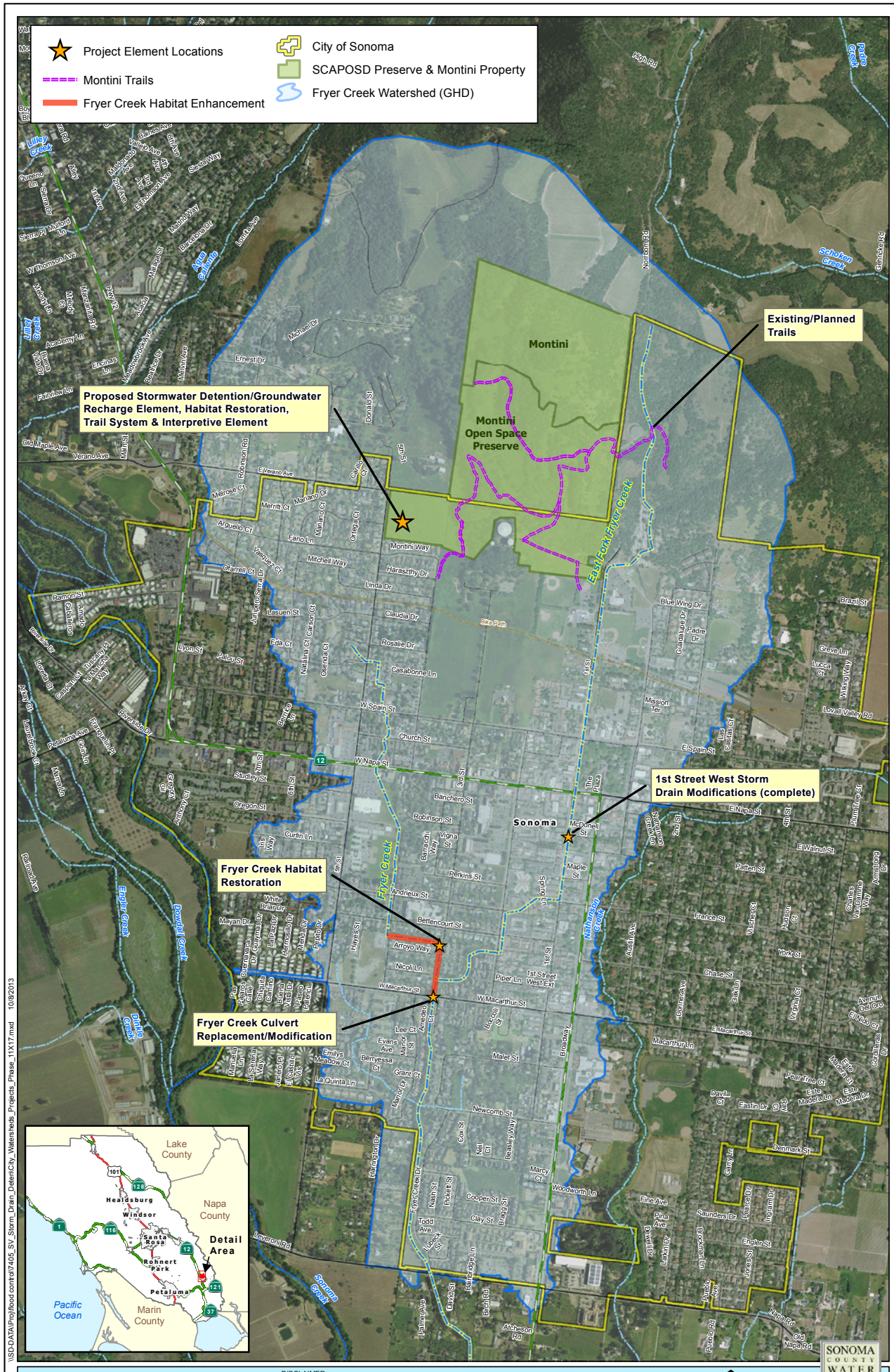

City Watersheds of Sonoma Valley

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